Amendment to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method comprising:

receiving discovery data collected from a network device by two or more discovery agents;

aggregating said discovery data;

coalescing the discovery data in a software file comprising a discovery document, said discovery data including two or more duplicate data entries; and

removing all but one of the duplicate data entries from the discovery document.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising registering agents in an agent directory.

3. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein said receiving discovery data comprises calling said two or more discovery agents from the agent directory.

4. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein said aggregating said data comprises calling two or more aggregator agents listed in an agent directory.

5. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein the agent directory comprises a plurality of Extensible Markup Language (XML) files.

6. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said removing all but one of the duplicate data entries comprises:

identifying two or more agents responsible for generating the two or more duplicate data entries, each agent having a priority value;

comparing the priority values of the two or more agents;

identifying a first agent having a highest priority, said first agent responsible for generating a first duplicate data entry in the two or more duplicate data entries; and

removing all but the first duplicate data entry.

7. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein the two or more agents are discovery agents.

8. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein the two or more agents are aggregator agents.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the discovery document is an Extensible Markup Language (XML) file.

10. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said receiving discovery data comprises receiving discovery data collected from two or more network device by said two or more discovery agents.

11. (Original) The method of claim 10, further comprising:

storing the discovery document in a discovery database; and

generating a key for each discovered network device in the discovery document.

12. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method comprising:

registering a first plurality of agents;

performing a first discovery operation including

collecting and aggregating data from a first plurality of network devices with said first plurality of agents said data including two or more duplicate data entries;

coalescing said data in a software file comprising a discovery document, said coalescing comprising:

removing all but one of the duplicate data entries from said discovery document;

assigning a key to each network device based on a precedence file containing instructions for generating keys; and

appending said precedence file to said discovery document;

registering an additional agent; and

performing a second discovery operation with a second plurality of agents including said first plurality of agents and said additional agent.

13. (Original) The method of claim 12, wherein said first plurality of agents include a plurality of discovery agents and a plurality of aggregator agents.

14. (Original) The method of claim 12, wherein said registering the additional agent comprises storing an agent file describing attributes of the additional agent in an agent directory.

15. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the agent file comprises an Extensible Markup Language (XML) file.

 

16. (Previously Presented) An article, including instructions residing on a machine-readable medium, the instructions causing a machine to:

receive discovery data collected from a network device by two or more discovery agents;

aggregate said discovery data;

coalesce the discovery data in a software file comprising a discovery document, said discovery data including two or more duplicate data entries; and

remove all but one of the duplicate data entries from the discovery document.

17. (Original) The article of claim 16, further comprising instructions that cause the machine to register agents in an agent directory.

18. (Previously Presented) The article of claim 17, wherein the instructions that cause the machine to receive discovery data comprise instructions that cause the machine to call said two or more discovery agents from the agent directory.

19. (Original) The article of claim 17, wherein the instructions that cause the machine to aggregate said data

comprise instructions that cause the machine to call two or more aggregator agents listed in an agent directory.

20. (Original) The article of claim 17, wherein the agent directory comprises a plurality of Extensible Markup Language (XML) files.

21. (Previously Presented) The article of claim 16, wherein the instructions that cause the machine to remove the second duplicate data entry comprise instructions that cause the machine to:

identify two or more agents responsible for generating the two or more duplicate data entries, each agent having a priority value;

compare the priority values of the two or more agents;

identify a first agent having a highest priority, said first agent responsible for generating a first duplicate data entry in the two or more duplicate data entries; and

remove all but the first duplicate data entry.

22. (Original) The article of claim 21, wherein the two or more agents are discovery agents.

 

23. (Original) The article of claim 21, wherein the two or more agents are aggregator agents.

24. (Original) The article of claim 16, wherein the discovery document is an Extensible Markup Language (XML) file.

25. (Previously Presented) The article of claim 16, wherein the instructions that cause the machine to receive discovery data comprise instructions that cause the machine to receive discovery data collected from two or more network devices by said two or more discovery agents.

26. (Original) The article of claim 25, further comprising instructions that cause the machine to:

store the discovery document in a discovery database; and

generate a key for each discovered network device in the discovery document.

27. (Previously Presented) An article, including instructions residing on a machine-readable medium, the instructions causing a machine to:

register a first plurality of agents;

perform a first discovery operation including

collect and aggregate data from a first plurality of network devices with said first plurality of agents said data including two or more duplicate data entries;

coalesce said data in a software file comprising a discovery document by:

removing all but one of the duplicate data entries from said discovery document;

assigning a key to each network device based on a precedence file containing instructions for generating keys; and

appending said precedence file to said discovery document;

register an additional agent; and

perform a second discovery operation with a second plurality of agents including said first plurality of agents and said additional agent.

28. (Original) The article of claim 27, wherein said first plurality of agents include a plurality of discovery agents and a plurality of aggregator agents.

29. (Original) The article of claim 28, wherein the instructions that cause the machine to register the additional agent comprise instructions that cause the machine to store an

agent file describing attributes of the additional agent in an agent directory.

30. (Original) The article of claim 29, wherein the agent file comprises an Extensible Markup Language (XML) file.